

PHILOSOPHY AND PEACE

These days of global tension and conflict, peace is perhaps the modern man's most cherished value. Its opposite, war or armed aggression is today a serious cause for fear and trembling. Its cloud hangs daily over all nations, the developed and the developing alike. Africa's most troubled spot is clearly South Africa, the continent's great time bomb, because of its inhuman system known to the world as "apartheid".

The problem of war and peace has indeed challenged man practically since his appearance on this planet. As early as the sixth century, B.C. Heraclitus, the great philosopher of flux declared war, "the father of all things". With all the learning, scientific technique and wisdom at his command, man has consistently pursued peace, the conditions for a lasting peace, for example, as well as the causes of war and tumult among nations. He has practically failed to come up with the answers or the right solutions.

"Why this uproar among the nations?", the psalmist poses the question. The answer could come from theology and also from philosophy; from revelation and reason as well. The interest of this short article is the latter, that is to say, philosophy or reason. What light do philosophers shed on the causes of war and on the nature and conditions for lasting peace on earth? This is the core of our inquiry. Its ambition is a modest one and is firmly rooted in the premise that philosophy does not limit itself to theoretical, abstract questions but to the practical, down-to-earth problems of man's daily life as well, such as war and peace.

NATURE OF PEACE

Perhaps never before in the history of man has the problem of peace (and war) assumed such a universal and fundamental significance. Because of modern man's mastery of nature and his great command over the weapons of life and death, the issue

of peaceful co-existence or total death for all has become a house-hold concern not only to the politicians and world leaders but to other classes of people as well.

'Peace' is used constantly by both individuals and socio-political groups alike and they give it different, often highly contradictory interpretations. Peace or "law and order" in the racist regime of South Africa, for example, is not the same for the white man and the black. They certainly speak two different languages in that regard. All agree, however, in principle at least, that peace is something which all humans desire, but everyone seems to endow it with the content of his own hopes and fears, values, and demands. Everyone points to different ways and methods of achieving it. It becomes therefore necessary to render its concept more precise and concrete.

Both Aquinas and Augustine gave a classic definition of peace as "the tranquility of order".¹ It is a state of undistributed equilibrium between individuals, states, or nations. This order of relationship between persons or groups is a natural longing for man since it is a fundamental condition for continued existence of mankind.

But peace must not be understood negatively as the mere absence or even elimination of wars. This is only a negative aspect of it. Its positive connotation is more fundamental. The "tranquility of order" existing between individuals or social groups is the result of injustice, of giving to everyone his due and to the nations (in case of international peace) their due. Respect for others' rights becomes a basic condition for a peaceful co-existence. Consequently peace rightly understood implies justice or equity among individuals as well as nations.

PHILOSOPHERS AND WAR

Peace is worked for, at times, fought for. It is by no means a gift to man since his life is repeatedly marked by strifes, dissensions and antagonisms of all sorts, at individual as well as collective levels. Indeed, as Immanuel Kant holds, "the state of peace among men living side by side is not the natural state (*Status naturalis*); the natural state is one of war".² Like Hobbes

who was of the same view, Kant did not regard the state of war as always "open hostilities, but at least an unceasing threat of war".³ What has remained the foremost concern of philosophers throughout history are the causes of man's chronic belligerent state and the necessary conditions for lasting or perpetual peace (at least in the negative sense of absence of war) among nations.

As for wars, and for that matter, most of the evils in nature, philosophers, particularly the traditional ones, locate their chief sources in man himself, in his "passions" or "drives" or "appetites". They are eloquent on the fact that human passions when not controlled by reason become disordered and engender dissensions, injustice, and ultimately wars of different magnitude in real life. Boethius for instance, in his *The Consolation of Philosophy* cries out in total dismay as he contemplates the social aspect of the human condition degraded by human passions and appetites, "who first woke up our passions and desires and with them our costly dangers".

Augustine is no less articulate in his *On Free Choice of the Will*, "Meanwhile the region of lust rages tyrannically and distracts the life and whole spirit of man with many conflicting storms of terror . . .". Plato in the *Republic* speaks about the acquisitive appetite in man as the cause of dissensions and other social evils among humans. He clearly states, "the dissensions that arise among men from the possessions of property . . ." In the *Phaedo*, he makes an explicit assertion that "wars and revolutions, and battles are due simply and solely to the body and its desires". Money for him also is a source of social ill since "money", according to him in *Critias* "locks men's hearts and unlocks their desires". Men, Hobbes remarks in his *Leviathan*, are continually in competition for honour and dignity which in turn breed envy, hatred, and finally war.

Other philosophers particularly since Karl Marx have gone beyond human passions or man's inherent proclivity to evil in locating the sources of his hostility to one another. The main source, they argue, lies in the socio-economic conditions of man. Marxism indeed marks a turning point in this question. It exposes and explains the socio-economic class and historic deter-

minants of wars and all class antagonisms. Indeed the prevalent socio-political and economic structures in the world today are foremost causes of man's inhumanity to man at national as well as international levels.

PHILOSOPHY AND PEACE

To plan a world without wars, a world of perpetual peace is today the most ambitious, the most important, the most urgent task of humanity. Philosophers recognize the causes of war. To many of them like Hobbes, war is the natural condition of man such that man is necessarily a wolf to man. History has indeed repeatedly proved man to be barbarous. Consequently what has preoccupied philosophers are not only the causes but the remedies of war, the conditions which guarantee that men will eventually renounce this barbarity of wars and their consequences. The materialization of "eternal peace" in the world might be remote in practice but philosophers have always hoped of its possibility, at times, its probability.

For Plato, philosophers have to become kings or kings be endowed with philosophic wisdom before mankind has hopes of peace and justice in this world. John Dewey spoke of the controlled use of science and technology as the ultimate saviour of man. It is only through these that man can perfect the unperfected world and rectify the unjust moral and social order. Marx toiled for scientific communism and thought he found a key to man's happiness and peace by calling for a death-blow to capitalism or the private ownership of the means of production.

Perhaps the most committed philosopher to the idea of "perpetual peace" for mankind was Immanuel Kant. He was a humanitarian, who championed the rights and interests of mankind and saw war as the foremost obstacle to be overcome on the difficult road of securing these rights. His important work on the subject of war and peace among nations is *Perpetual Peace*. The summary of Professor Lewis White Beck, the editor, reveals the main contents of this small but powerful work:

He [Kant] sets up preliminary articles prescribing what states, as they now exist, must do to have peace; then he formulates definitive articles of political philosophy, showing what must be the constitution of the states and what must be the structure of a league of nations under international law if peace is to be lasting. He next turns to a study of the conditions which make men and states war-like and which, he believes, give hope that they will eventually renounce this barbarity.⁴

Certainly, therefore, philosophers have not been indifferent to peace and happiness of mankind. On the contrary, the concept of perpetual peace with the abolition of all wars has remained a moral and political idea, not at all, a chimerical one, as Kant points out:

We must act as if that thing, perpetual peace existed — though it may not exist: we must endeavour to make it real and strive after the constitution (perhaps the republicanism of each and every state) which seems to us most likely to bring it to pass and to make an end to the disastrous war-making to which all states without exception have directed their institutions as their chief end.⁵

Hobbes recognizes man's basic war-like nature and to guarantee peace and safety for all, he posits the existence of great *Leviathan* or *mortal god*, "to which we owe, under the *immortal God*, our peace and defence".⁶ For Hobbes, the *Leviathan* or the *Commonwealth* is the absolute and sole condition for lasting peace among men.

The quest for and conditions of peace and harmony among peoples as among nations underlie the "Social Contracts" of Lock, Hume, and Rousseau in their views concerning the beginning of civil government. They were by no means indifferent to the tragedies and violence of war and they offered what appeared to them to be the best remedy.

PEACE — THE METAPHYSICAL DIMENSION

Philosophers have indeed been concerned about peace on earth and have articulated in various ways the conditions and

requirements for its concrete realization but the problem is that peace has repeatedly eluded man. His life has always been and perhaps will always be characterized by dissensions, strifes, riots, and rebellions of all kinds, intensity, and duration. The insights of philosophers concerning the right formula for peace on earth or conditions for its attainment have not in practice yielded desired results. Some of their views are impractical such as Plato's philosopher-king theory. Kant's criticism is insightful. "That Kings should philosophize or philosophers become kings is not to be expected. Nor is it to be wished, since the possession of power inevitably corrupts the untrammelled judgment of reason".⁷

The source of man's corruption and abuse of power is from within, a view reminiscent of Aquinas, Augustine and other Christian philosophers. The true cause of disorder, animosities, wars, revolutions, for these philosophers, is ultimately traceable to man's disordered interior, that is to say, his sinful and corrupt nature.

Other views of philosophers on the conditions for peace among nations are defective and proved false by time. John Dewey, for instance, anchors his hopes for terrestrial peace on the controlled use of science and technology. Progress in science and technology can now no longer guarantee peace as was thought earlier. These days, they can be and are often used for purposes of war and power-assertion rather than peace and understanding among nations. Science and scientific methods can make it possible for man to understand the laws governing nature and society but they are not automatic and infallible guarantees for peace and stability among nations. On the contrary history and experience have repeatedly shown that when man is equipped with power and knowledge, the results have often been frightful. The modern man's dreadful predicament stems largely from the possession of too much knowledge, power, and control over the laws of nature. In short science and technology have jeopardized rather than paved way for peace in the world.

Marx's insight constitutes an important contribution to the causes as well as the remedies of class antagonisms and wars. By explaining and exposing their economic and materialistic bases or determinants, Marxism has greatly helped man understand his problems and his role in shaping his own destiny but it has its own shortcomings and shortsightedness. There was in Marx a curious idea that class conflicts occurred only between classes and never *within* them, an idea proved false by experience. Class conflicts do not account for all wars, neither could it be known *a priori* that classless society marks the end of all wars. The problem of peace within man and with others (national and international peace) simply does not solely depend, as Marx saw it, on the mere arrangement of socio-economic conditions of man, since he cannot solely be explained from "without", that is to say, in his external relationships and interactions. He is, at bottom, a metaphysical being.

The emphatic point here is that neither science and technology as often envisioned by scientists; nor the external adjustment or change of man's social and economic conditions by *themselves* can guarantee peace. Admittedly, in an era of scientific-technological revolution, to attempt any meaningful peaceful negotiations between nations is unthinkable without science and technology. Neither is the pursuance of any reasonable policy of peaceful co-existence among nations possible without the blessings of modern technology. Yet science and technology by themselves are definitely not automatic guarantees of peace and progress of mankind.

The crisis of peace goes beyond science. There is a metaphysical dimension to it. The causes of wars and endemic disputes among men and nations may well be sought elsewhere, in the life of the spirit.

Here we advance the insight of Gabriel Marcel with regard to the Western man :

It can never be too strongly emphasized that the crisis which Western man is undergoing today is a metaphysical one; there is probably no more dangerous illusion than

that of imagining that some readjustment of social or institutional conditions could suffice of itself to appease a contemporary sense of disquiet which rises, in fact from the very depths of man's being.⁸

This applies to most if not all the problems of modern man, not just those of the Western man.

In this question of the metaphysical angle to human ills and problems, we have to take note of the fact that the foremost problem of the modern man is crisis of values, the curbing of his appetites and irrational desires, the recognition and appreciation of higher and more permanent goods in the midst of the fleeting goods of the senses, etc. In this connection, the insight of Augustine in his *Confessions*, that God has made us for Himself and that our hearts remain restless until they rest in Him, might be illuminating to the modern man in his search for lasting peace and harmony.

Definitely it is important to note that the relationships between men and states cannot be governed by the sane mechanistic laws as the forces and irrational elements of the universe. Laws governing man and guaranteeing peace, justice, respect among nations, as Pope John XXIII teaches in his *Pacem In Terris* (Peace on Earth), "must be sought elsewhere, namely, where the Father of all things wrote them, that is, in the nature of man".⁹ For any human society to be well-ordered and peaceful, the Pope recognizes certain basic moral principles, such as, that every human being is a person with fundamental rights and duties, some of which are the right to life and a worthy standard of living; the right to worship God according to one's conscience; the right to freedom of association etc.¹⁰ One realizes the significance of these papal insights when one reflects on the fact that many revolutions, revolts, wars have occurred and still occur precisely because these basic human rights have been systematically denied by one government or the other in the course of human history. There is consequently a metaphysical angle to the cause of peace or war in the world. Science alone cannot give all the answers or all the guarantees.

PEACE: A COOPERATIVE ENTERPRISE

The point is strongly made that for the age-long problems of peace and war among peoples and nations of the world, their solutions must be sought beyond science and technology. Mastering the forces and laws of nature is not enough to make man's dreams of "eternal peace" come true. In this question, one of the important tasks of philosophy and of philosophers is to explain the essence and role of science, its possibilities, and radical limitations.

Nothing is automatic with man and the conditions of his existence. Peace is a process which must be properly planned, controlled, and realized, but cooperative insights from science as well as philosophy are needed. The future of mankind cannot be left to scientists alone. Political analysts, sociologists, psychologists, theologians, etc. have their particular contributions to make. To ignore any particular science would indeed be a disservice to the cause of peace and welfare of man.

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NOTES

1. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa-IIae (*Secunda Secundae*), 1. 29, Art. 1, ad 1: Augustine, *de Civitate Dei*, Bk. 19, c. 13.
2. *Perpetual Peace*, ed. Lewis White 'Beck, (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc. 1957), p. 10.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Op. Cit.*, ("Introduction", viii).
5. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
6. Hobbes, *Leviathan Parts I & II*, (The Bobbs-Merrill Company, The Library of Liberal Arts, 1958), pp. 142-145.
7. *Perpetual Peace*, p. 34.
8. *Man Against Mass Society*, (Chicago; A Gateway edition, 4th ed., 1969), p. 37.
9. *Racem In Terris in the Social Teachings of the Church*, ed. Anne Fremantle, (New York: Mentor-Omega Books, 1963), 278.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 279ff.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Indian Council of Philosophical Research had undertaken to prepare a **Who's Who of Contemporary Scholars And Teachers of Philosophy** in India. A proforma for the purpose has been sent individually to all teachers in different Universities in the country. Those who have not yet received such a proforma may write to the undersigned as soon as possible.

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